

Understanding *Ulysses*—from the Fifteenth Episode : A Most Fantastic Life of a Hero (2)

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James Joyce's *Ulysses*(1922), generally recognized as one of the twentieth century's most important literary works, has a reputation for being extremely difficult for non-specialist readers. It is no wonder that most readers shrink before its complexity and do not attempt to read it.

In my work 『読解「ユリシーズ」』 (*Understanding Ulysses*), published by Kenkyusha in January of 1996 and reprinted in April of 1999, I presented detailed annotations of selected portions taken from the first half of *Ulysses*. They were designed to make this formidable but fascinating novel more accessible to Japanese readers.

As a sequel to that work, I have annotated selected portions of Chapter XV from the second half of *Ulysses*. This is by far the longest chapter of *Ulysses*. The structure takes the form of a play, complete with dialogue and stage directions. The narration of actual events is short and much of the chapter describes a series of fantastic events. The setting is the brothel district in the nighttown of Dublin, the capital of Ireland. The time is midnight. This chapter with its dramatic structure is less difficult to read than other chapters of *Ulysses*, and arouses more interest and praise.

In my selected portions, Leopold Bloom, the hero of *Ulysses*, goes into the nighttown in pursuit of drunken Stephen Dedalus, a son of his friend, and stops in front of a brothel. On the steps, Bloom is accosted by a young whore. Her request for his speech makes a well-informed reply that leads to a vision of Bloom as Leopold the First, an imaginary king

of Ireland. In the ups and downs, Bloom's fantasy follows political career that allows him as dictator to form radical schemes for both political and religious reformation. As hostile sentiment against Bloom grows more intense, his decision to retrieve his lost honor leads him to perform a miracle: giving birth to eight male children at one time as 'a finished example of the new womanly man'. Finally, as Bloom becomes a Christ-like martyr carrying the sins of the people and is burnt at the stake, his hallucination ends.

In my notes to the text, I have attempted to annotate every word and phrase in order to elucidate the difficult text of Joyce well known for his "scrupulous" use of language.